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Jim Buckheit
Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

December 12, 2006

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

This letter is in full support of the proposed rulemaking regarding certification of professional personnel, Chapter 49. I am writing this letter as an individual who has worked among the early education community for the last 12 years and continues to address issues of global quality of early care and education and more specifically the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education.

I have seen first hand the result of unguided and misplaced expectations by elementary school certified teachers on preschool age children. Often times children's behavior in these situations become targeted as being in need of "therapy" when in fact the behavior is a response to expectations exceeding their developmental level, the way in which the learning environment has been set up, and the teaching strategies employed. For example, three year old children expected to be seated for extended periods of time working on paper and pencil tasks with the goal of teaching academics and ill regard to individual children's learning styles or needs.

I feel assured that with the changes proposed to Chapter 49 ALL teachers, PreK - 12, will be more equipped and armed with the child development knowledge and teaching strategies necessary to set up an education classroom environment that is developmentally appropriate and is able to make adaptations and accommodations to meet individual diverse learners' needs. I am particularly in strong support of Sections 49.131; 142; and 143 to add requirements that a percentage of pre-service course work include content related to addressing accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive settings. It has been demonstrated that when this approach to pre-service preparation is taken, all teachers and children benefit.

In addition to observing classrooms of misplaced expectations, I have been fortunate to witness early childhood and Kindergarten classrooms when teachers have been well prepared to work with young children, have a keen understanding of child development and can respond to the individual needs of children. Classrooms like these should be available and accessible to ALL children and as a result of the Chapter 49 proposal I feel certain that we may be able to achieve this outcome in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Suzanne A. Milbourne, MS, OTR/L, PhD
Research Associate Faculty
Thomas Jefferson University
Child and Family Studies Research Programs

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